

VISIT...

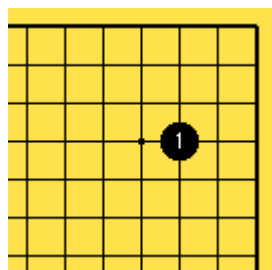
LANZAROTE
Caliente.COM

Gentle Joseki, part VIII by Pieter Mioch

Things you don't want to do

The 4-3, or "ko-moku" play is the most complicated opening move known today. There are uncountable variations and to master them all would take the average person a lifetime or three. Because of this versatility the 4-3 move is certainly worthwhile to have a closer look at how to put it to good use. As I often do in Gentle Joseki I'd like to approach discussing ko-moku from the opposite direction. Since it is not humanly possible to memorize all the patterns I'll keep it simple and concentrate at ways of playing which are regarded as being bad according to modern go theory. So, memorizing these "anti-joseki" patterns will help to stay away from bad moves and automatically make you play the correct patterns, piece of cake.

cute move



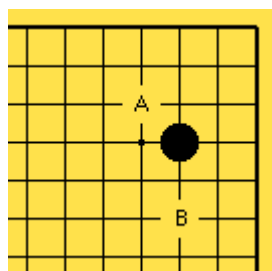
Here it is, the 4-3 move, isn't it cute? I very much doubt it is the best opening move possible but I doubt it even more if anybody will come up with evidence to the contrary in the next century. Although not as popular as it once was, the ko-moku play is an excellent move. It is a little low but all the same it's way more positive compared to the 3-3 play.

Diagram 1

Not to discourage you but I seldom play ko-moku in my own games. It's not that I don't like it or that there are any hidden defects or stuff like that but when playing ko-moku I always feel I have to play a real "serious" game and think very hard. It goes without saying that this is not my strong suit, I prefer lightning games big time and the last serious games I played were in the Insei league some 300 years ago. (still dream about these games occasionally, they would take the whole day and seldom finish inside 6 hours)

Well, to make good on my promise of telling you what you shouldn't do please have a look at dia 2. Follow up moves like the diagonal (kosumi) move and the one-space jump (ikken-tobi) are often worth considering in case of having played at 4-4 (hoshi) but not with the ko-moku opening.

Never mind anybody's advice

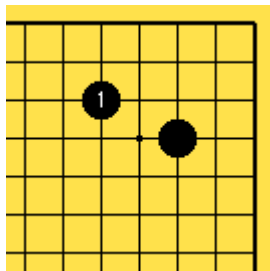


You won't hear me say, though, that you -never- should play at either A or B as a follow up move to the 4-3 play. It is safe to say, however, that A and B are regarded as bad moves. "How bad?" you ask? Humpf, as all good questions, that is not easy to answer. If the best move would be worth ten points than I guess that A and B are roughly the same value of between 8-9 points. In other words, as a novice to this game I don't think that there is anything wrong with freely playing them in your own games, never mind what anybody is telling you about books this and books that.

Diagram 1

So, what -are- the ten pointers? Which moves are given as the best continuation after having played at the 4-3 point?

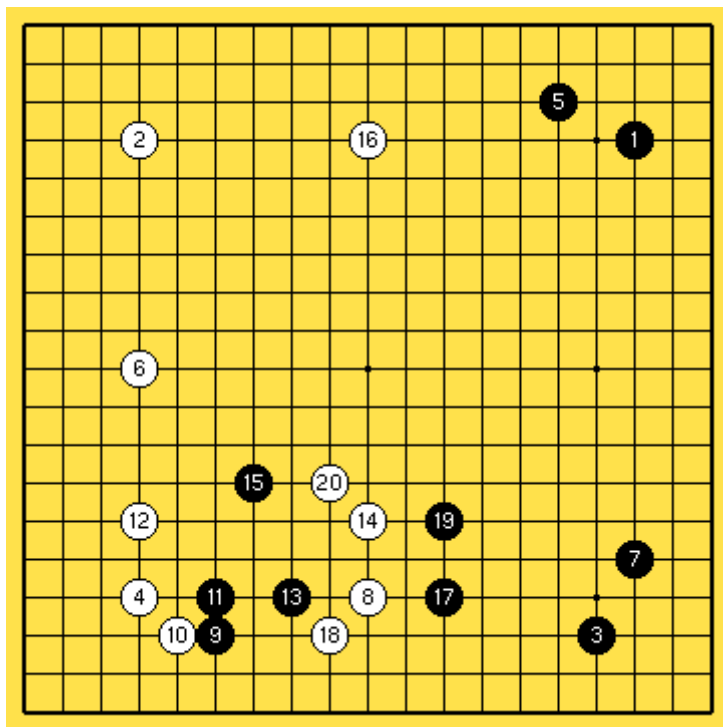
Once Again, a Shimari



There is no move which can hold a candle to black one in dia 3. Likewise, there is no formation as omnipotent as this small-knight's enclosure (shimari). If in an even game black can make two shimaries with his first four moves he can never have a bad game.

Diagram 3

Unbeatable?



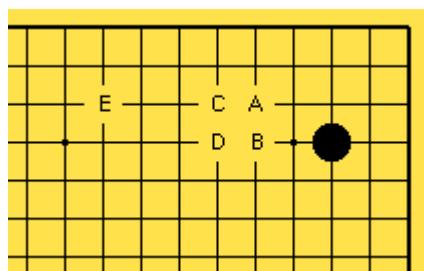
15th Meijin league, January 1991
black: Cho Chikun
white: Rin Kaiho (+resign)

Now I thought that what I just said about black never having a bad game when making two shimaries was rather an understatement. I just finished searching for a good game example where black gets an easy win because of his shimaries. Till my surprise, however, **all** the five games I managed to find were won by white! It seems the vitality of the center oriented way of playing helps to reinforce one's confidence or something, that is to say, I have no clue as to why white wins all the games, probably coincidence.

Diagram 3a

Like I said before, however, the ko-moku opening is a kind of "serious" instead of the ol' rough'n tumble style street fighting it shows an attitude which some regard as more mature but others just think is boring (who said that?). When playing with a shimari it shows that you prefer to build solid, strong positions from where you will develop steadily while making territory. Opposite to this way of playing would be moyo making and preferring making influence instead of points. Both ways of placing your stones on the board are, of course, perfectly common. Even if you feel that one of them doesn't suit your temperament or character I still think it would be a very good idea to try both, playing solid and making territory versus playing light and building moyos.

Orthodox moves

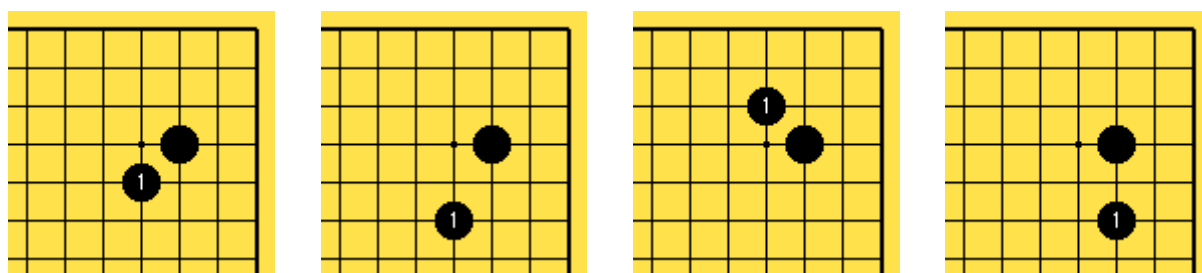


In dia 4 A-E show the moves which are regarded as orthodox, i.e. these are the plays black should be playing according to the book. The moves C, D and especially E are not very tight, however, and do not help black ensuring territory yet. Properly speaking, move E is not a follow up but a whole-board kind of play, not necessarily regarding the corner as being important.

Diagram 4

Let me repeat what I told you earlier about moves you shouldn't play. In dias 5-5c you can see moves which are regarded as being bad. None of those, however, will cost you the game. This even goes for pro's although it will be next to impossible to find a game record of a pro actually using one of these moves in the opening. To be sure, they are slack and have other shortcomings but I wouldn't worry about it too much if I were you. Try them, memorize them and when you feel you got an idea why they're not too sharp keep them for special occasions (explaining the game to your mother in law or something like that).

Non- Standard Moves

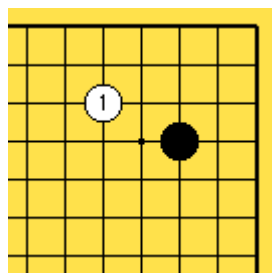


I like the moves in dia 5-5c, though, just copying pro moves is good too, of course, but I honestly think that the road to fast improvement is playing lesser moves and come to understand why they're not so hot. You can be sure, however, that after the game, no matter what the result might be your opponent will keep telling you these moves cannot be good and you shouldn't be playing them and tons more of talk you sometimes have to put up with after the game which does not contribute to the game very much, although it can be great fun at times.

Diagram 5, 5a, 5b & 5c

Up to here I briefly described what to do with your ko-moku stone if you have the chance of playing a second move. It is, however, likely that you often do not have the chance of doing so and your opponent will play an approach move first.

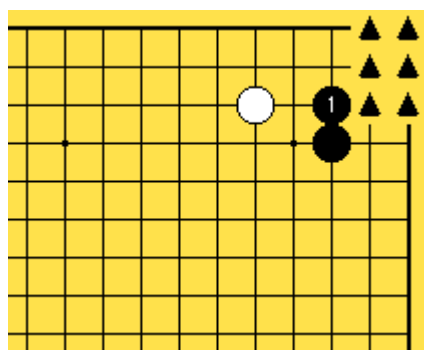
Dealing With An Approach Move



This is the typical way of thwarting black's shimari plans, the white "keima-kakari" or small knight approach move. Let's have a look at what you shouldn't be doing after this when playing black.

Diagram 6

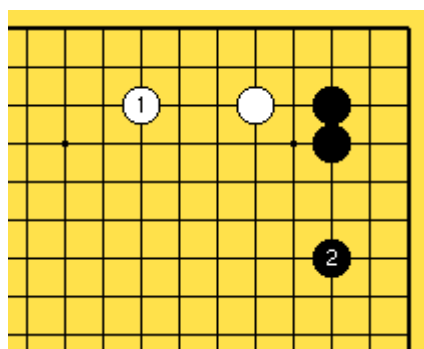
Not Good Enough



Black one in dia 7 is too small. The corner territory is only worth about six points, this does not justify the two black moves here. As I often said in previous episodes, one (opening) move should be worth about 5 points.

Diagram 7

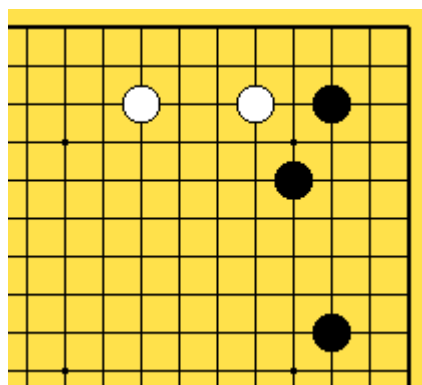
Too Tight



Dia 7a shows a likely continuation. The moves look normal but the result is so so, not really bad for black but a little slack. Not game-losing but a bit too tight, have a look at a better shape for black in dia 7b.

Diagram 7a

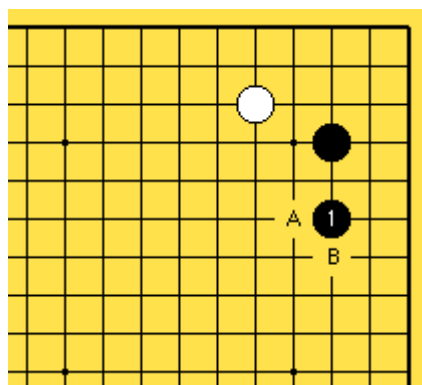
Superior Shape



Undoubtedly the result in dia 7a is more solid for black compared to this diagram, dia 7b. All the same, the result in dia 7b is a joseki while dia 7a is not because black is over concentrated, spending too many moves in a cramped place, 'kind of how you feel after a huge dinner and the cake and coffee arrives just a little too early.

Diagram 7b

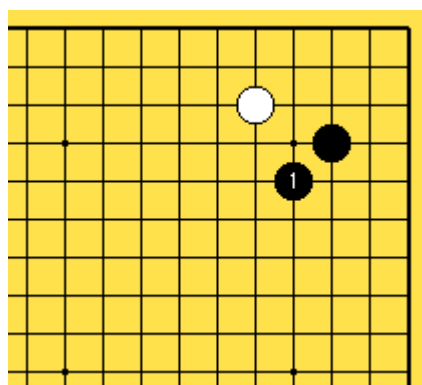
Too Solid



In dia 8 you can see yet another move, black one, which is not standard and thought of as too solid, over protective if you want. Instead of black one a move at either A or B would be better.

Diagram 8

Shusaku's Kosumi



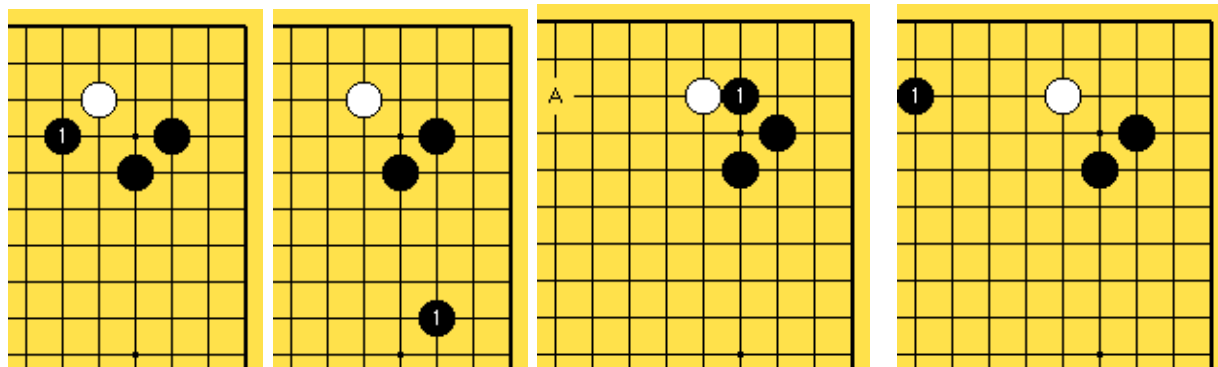
This diagonal move is a border case. It is the famous "Shusaku kosumi" named after the 19th century Go-Master who virtually won all his games on black by playing it. Strange when you think about it, you can invent and play an excellent new move but as long as you're not going to win any games with it people will think it's worthless.

Diagram 9

According to modern go theory this move is not good enough if black has to give komi to white to make up for the advantage of having the first move. It's a very solid move, however, and I'm fond of it and often use it, when I play ko-moku, almost never, that is. It's also still being used in pro games which might help you a bit more to convince you it's playable.

One more word about the Shusaku kosumi, it is especially nice and easy to use when realizing that you have four next possible moves (compare this to the usual amount, which is about two or three).

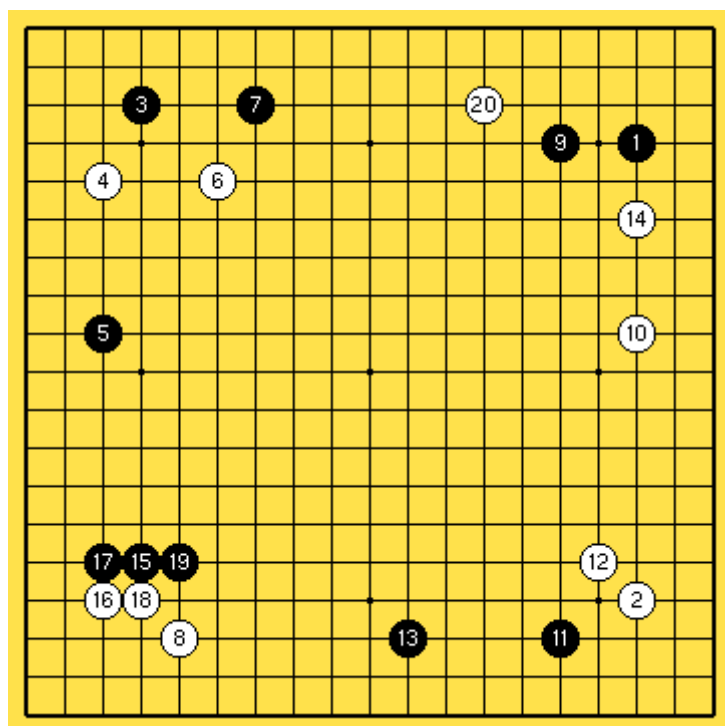
Four Good Moves



Black 1 in dia 9b is often played one or two spaces down, for example, when playing it after first having played one in dia 9a. Note that black 1 in dia 9c works best when there already is a black stone somewhere around A. The pincer in dia 9d gives a situation which was often seen in go of the 18th and 19th century but it still is played today.

Diagram 9a, 9b, 9c & 9d

A Shuei Game



1875-08-22
black: Shuei
white: Nakagawa (+2pt)

The reason I selected the game of the 19th century shown in dia 10 is because when looking at it even a person who never played a game in his life can get an idea of what you can use a stone at the 4-3 point for. We have a shimari (upper right white formation) a hasami (pincer) at the left, the famous Shusaku kosumi in the lower right and an alternative way of approaching the opponent's 5-3 stone (lower left) with another move than at 4-3.

Diagram 10

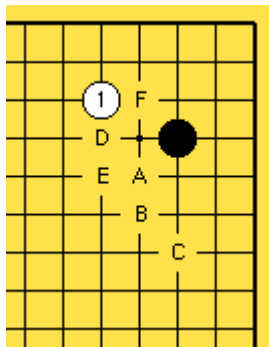
I love the old master's games and I know that if you can bring yourself to replay say 3 of such games twice per day and manage to keep it up for a month your go skill will dramatically improve. Not that there's anything wrong with modern games but the fighting of today is of such ferocity and is so complicated that it is very hard for players other than top amateurs level players or up to learn something from them without any explanation. Older masters can play fierce too, of course, but old games were played with virtually no time limit so that top pros of these days had a very different mentality than their modern counter parts. They took their time and thought twice before embarking on a rash sequence of moves, the outcome of which is often far from clear.

In the last centuries time allowances have become shorter and shorter. In Korea 3 hours per person is common and it can be expected that the 5-hour allowance used in Japan will get shortened too. (this is already happening, not in all games, though) This is a very good tendency for amateurs who love to see pro games getting bloodier and bloodier, the less time pros have the higher the possibility is that the go board will turn in a raging full-scale battlefield right from move one.

Well, back to business, the ko-moku move. The most common approach move is the knight's move or keima kakari. Now black has three choices:

1. solidify the 4-3 point by playing an extension
2. playing a pincer and see what white wants
3. ignore white altogether and play somewhere else

About Six Possibilities

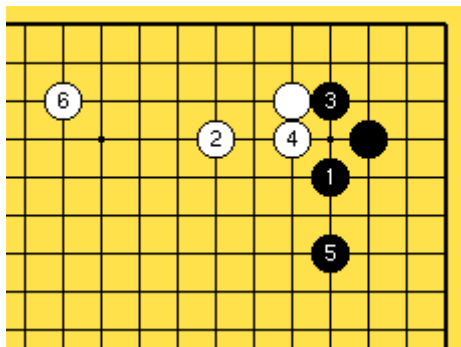


In dia 11 you can see the defensive oriented moves which black can play if he doesn't want to play a pincer. Move F is special and usually not played but certainly not unplayable. If black would answer at E the situation reverts to a 5-5 joseki (dia 23 in GJ-VII) were black's first move in the corner was at E, white plays 1 and black answers at ko-moku.

Diagram 11

You guessed already that my recommendation here is the play at A, it is solid and easy to understand, there is not much mischief your opponent can try to cook up. I'll show you an "and everybody lived happily ever after" joseki to give you an idea you can work with.

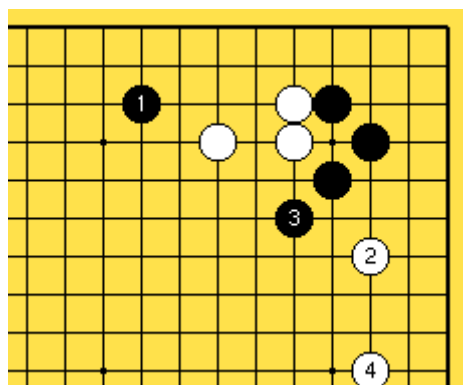
All Peace and Quiet?



Dia 12 shows a sequence of both players can be happy with, however..

Diagram 12

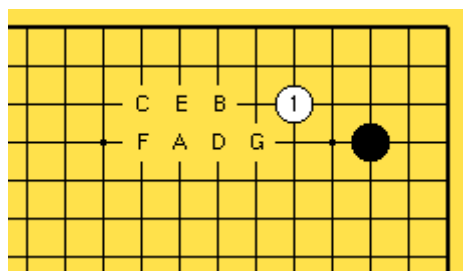
Beyond Joseki



Things can get hairy easily as you can see in dia 12a. Once black start throwing his weight around and plays aggressively at 1 white will immediately make clear he is not in the least impressed and start a counter offensive at 2. After white 4 you are in no-man's-land and you'll have to figure out what to do next by looking at the whole board and not overestimating your own fighting skill.

Diagram 12a

Pincers

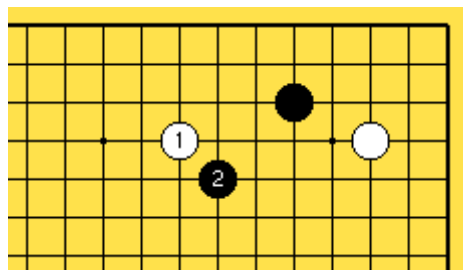


In dia 13 I've tried to rank the possible pincers A-G in order of commonness. The play at G is not often seen (but possible) and A is gold record all-time favorite. Its main feature is that the situation does not settle easy and that there are numerous variations the results of which are not at all similar.

Diagram 13

When starting on Gentle Joseki 8, a month ago, I started to use the 4-3 move in my own games and it seemed to work contagious because many of my opponents started playing at 4-3 too. About 90% of my opponents played the A pincer in no time and I decided to play black 2 in dia 14 a couple of times.

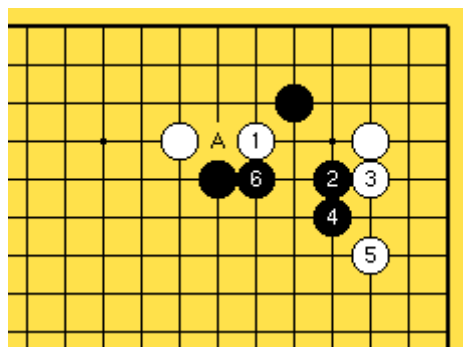
In Love, Again



I've been in love with this move ever since I saw it for the first time, some 14 years ago. It's perfect to catch your opponent off-guard with and it works very well with a black stone in the upper left corner to back it up.

Diagram 14

Looks Vital, But ...

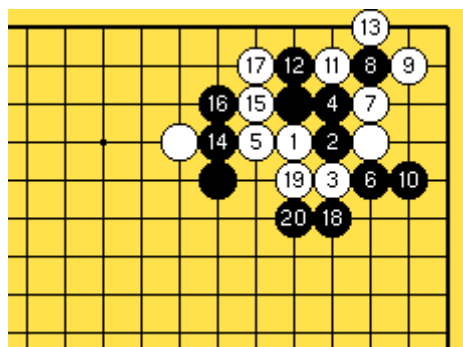


White 1 in dia 15 may seem as a logical move (ergo, it is logical, moving between two enemy stones in a way they cannot expect to link up, ever) but it is a miss fire. Black quietly plays the forcing moves of 2 and 4 and next comes back at 6 or A. White has no continuation which will make white 1 coming out good. White one only helped black strengthen himself and white only got a few points in the right corner back as compensation. The corner, by the way, which was his to start with.

Diagram 15

There are plenty of nice cozy joseki I could show you but since we're at the end of this episode I'll show you a long and difficult one.

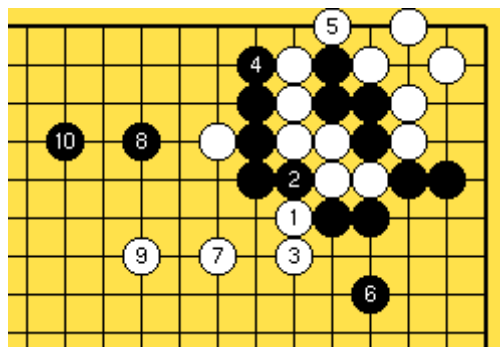
Sacrifice



Black 2 is natural, white 5 is trying to link his own stones together while at the same time keeping black separated. Black 10 is an unexpected move but once you get to think about it the only way of saving the situation is by making a sacrifice. Up to 20 black more or less has sealed white off, the result is about equal.

Diagram 16

Some defects Left But Equal Result



Black's formation, however, is by no means without its defects. White may very well continue with a play at one and starting a large-scale fight. Black's groups are not weak, however, and he should be able to handle the situation.

Diagram 16a

This is all for this time, I will continue with the 4-3 point and its variations in the next episode of Gentle Joseki, that will be episode 9. I still have to think up something "tying everything together and make it look good conclusion" for episode 10.

Appendix 01

Index of joseki's mentioned in this episode:

